



Soundings

Change-of-Command Special Edition



NEW COMMANDER ON BOARD AT THE DETROIT DISTRICT



Lt. Col. Davis takes command of the Detroit District



Lt. Col. James Davis and his wife, Margret, greet Conrad Valle, assistant district director for the U.S. Small Business Administration, in the receiving line after the change of command ceremony.

Lt. Col. James B. Davis assumed command of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District at a change of command ceremony held July 11, at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial in Grosse Pointe Farms, Mich.

Davis, who had previously served as brigade operations officer of the 18th Engineer Brigade in Heidelberg, Germany and recently returned from Afghanistan, where he served with the 130th Engineer Brigade, succeeds Lt. Col. William J. Leady.

“It is an honor and privilege to be here today and be joining the Detroit District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers team, an opportunity I have wanted my entire career,” said Davis, who became the 53rd commander of the Detroit District.

“I would like to thank Col. (Jeffrey C.) Smith and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for providing me this incredible opportunity to serve and lead this great organization. I would also like to thank Lt. Col. Leady for

his selfless service and smooth transition, and wish him the best as he heads off to Iraq.”

The heart of the ceremony was

the passing of the command flag, the symbol of the unit’s identity, from the departing commander to the arriving commander. Gary O’Keefe, deputy for program management, and the District’s senior civilian, represented the District’s workforce as he handed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ flag to Leady. Leady then passed the flag to Smith, who in turn, passed the flag to Davis. O’Keefe then accepted the flag from Davis, solidifying the bond between the Corps’ Army leadership and its civilian workforce.

“The Detroit District has a superb reputation and I have been very impressed with the professionalism, dedication and



Lt. Col. Davis meets one of his predecessors, retired Lt. Col. Donald Lauzon, the Detroit District’s commander from 2004 to 2006, after the change of command ceremony.

Cover photo: Lt. Col Davis receives the coveted commander’s “Blackberry” device from outgoing commander, Lt. Col. William Leady, passing the reign of command.



Executive Office Secretary Audrey Childress presents flowers to Margaret Davis, the new commander's wife, welcoming her on behalf of the Detroit District.

talent of the men and women of the district," Davis said. "I am very excited to be here and look forward to serving the Detroit District team and working with our Great Lakes partners as we serve the nation."

A native of Keene, N.H., Davis received a bachelor of science degree in civil engineering from

Norwich University in 1987, and was commissioned into the Army as an engineer officer. He received a masters of science degree in engineering management from the University of Missouri-Rolla in 1992. His military training includes the U.S. Army Ranger School, Sapper Leader Course, Airborne School, and U.S. Army Command and General Staff



Lt. Col. Davis presents the Corps flag or guidon to Gary O'Keefe, deputy for program management, completing the actual change of command.



The color guard presents the colors during the playing of the national anthem to begin the change of command ceremony.

College. Davis is married and has two children.

Col. Jeffrey C. Smith, commander and division engineer of the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, described Davis as an exceptional leader.

"Jim has a remarkable educational and service background that has thoroughly prepared him for this challenge," he said. "I'd like to welcome aboard the Davis family and assure you all that you have a great team here in Detroit."

Smith praised Leady, commander of the Detroit District since 2006, for his leadership. Leady is now the deputy commander of the 555th Engineer Brigade in Fort Lewis, WA, which has deployed to Iraq.

"Bill has been a tremendous team builder," Smith said. "Throughout his tenure in command, he built relationships with customers and stakeholders around the Great Lakes that resulted in working partnerships and solutions to many tough issues."



Lt. Col. James Davis shakes hands with Marie Strum, assistant chief of Engineering Technical Services, while he “troops the line” of the Detroit District’s senior leaders.

His ability to get people to work together led to the execution of an annual \$100 million engineering and construction program.

“Bill’s greatest legacy may be his navigation lead for this division on the Great Lakes, Smith added.

“He has consistently promoted a systems approach to the Great Lakes and has convincingly quantified dredging backlogs and annual needs in a way that has resulted in increases to the Great Lakes dredging appropriations that would be significant for now and in to the future. We wish the Leady family all the very best.”

Leady said, “It’s really a privilege to be a soldier in the United States Army and a further privilege to be an Army engineer officer. And of the time I’ve been an Army officer, the most humbling experience has been as commander of this district.”

New Chicago District Commander Col. Vincent Quarles thanks Lt. Col. William Leady for helping him get familiar with Great Lakes Regional issues



“The teamwork, the extra effort, technical skill, the educational level of this team is overwhelming—I’m really in awe,” he said. “That is why it’s an honor to be up here and the commander of this district for two years. I’ve had a lot of great jobs in the Army, but this is by far the highlight.”

The Detroit District, founded in 1841, is primarily engaged in civil works activities related to navigation and flood control within Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Indiana. It has an estimated \$86 million annual budget, with almost 360 employees, including engineers, scientists,



Col. Jeffrey Smith, commander of the Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, holds the official departure photograph of the division’s district commanders before presenting it to Lt. Col. Leady.

environmentalists, skilled technicians and a variety of other occupations.

“Thanks to the Detroit District workforce for being so supportive of me—working hard and being so professional that it’s really not a job, it’s a mission,” Leady said. “When you get to see the mission floating by, it’s really nice.”



Lt. Col. Leady bids farewell to the Detroit District before he deploys to his next assignment in Iraq.